



(U) The Special Operations Command -- 'The Quiet Professionals'

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(U) "I think we have an abort situation." With these words on 24 April 1980, Defense Secretary Harold Brown informed President Jimmy Carter of the situation at "Desert One," a remote desert site in Iran. He told the President of the ground commander's recommendation not to proceed with the mission to rescue 53 American hostages at the embassy in Tehran from the fanatical followers of the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. The President agreed to the commander's recommendation to pull the special unit back. Minutes later, however, an American RH-53 helicopter and an EC-130 aircraft collided on the ground causing the death of eight servicemen.

(U) American prestige and pride suffered as news of the mission failure at "Desert One" became known and the hostage situation continued to be played out on national television. It cast harsh light on the Pentagon's lack of readiness to deal with a new kind of enemy. This tragic incident, more than any other event, underscored the need for a specialized, well-trained and elite fighting force to respond to the most difficult situations, and most importantly, succeed. According to some political analysts, it also cost President Carter his bid for reelection in 1980.

(U) "Why did the mission fail?" In trying to answer this question, Congress and the Executive Branch took action to develop a capability within the Department of Defense to ensure future success in similar situations. After seven years of studies and debate, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation on 13 April 1987 and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was born.

(U) In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, USSOCOM was asked to play a central role in the campaign against terrorism. The activities of Special Operations Forces (SOF) teams first came to light as they and CIA officers assisted Northern Alliance fighters against the Taliban and were photographed riding across the barren landscape in Afghanistan on horseback. Armed with incredibly precise laser-pointing devices, SOF teams were instrumental in guiding the successful U.S. bombing campaign which routed Taliban and foreign fighters in Operation Enduring Freedom.

(U) Over the last two years, SOF teams were deployed in 128 countries, including Greece (for the Olympics), South Korea, Thailand, Philippines and a host of other countries. Not surprisingly, Iraq and Afghanistan are claiming the lion's share of special operators today.

(U) Since its activation, USSOCOM has evolved to be completely focused on having the finest trained and prepared warriors in the world who are in the right place, at the right time, facing the right adversary, with instant access to information and intelligence support and to agile fire support and mobility. Teams of special operators--whether Special Forces, Navy SEALs, Special Tactics, Psychological Operators, Civil Affairs, Army Rangers, aircrews or boat-crews--are part of a joint team that can efficiently leverage the full spectrum of combat support from air, space, land or sea.

(U) Today, USSOCOM is one of nine unified commands. It was activated to provide command, control and training for all special operations forces in the U.S. and has approximately 47,000 active, National Guard and reserve forces.

(U) The U.S. Special Operations Command's mission is twofold: "USSOCOM plans, directs, and executes special operations in the conduct of the War on Terrorism in order to disrupt, defeat, and destroy terrorist networks that threaten the United States, its citizens and interests worldwide. USSOCOM organizes, trains, equips and prioritizes the deployment and employment of special operations forces provided to Geographic Combatant Commanders, American Ambassadors and their country teams." USSOCOM's area of responsibility is the world.

(U) NSA/CSS has a presence at USSOCOM with a co-located NCR and Cryptologic Services Group (CSG). Their responsibility is to provide signals intelligence and information assurance products and services to USSOCOM and its components on a daily basis. [REDACTED], former NCR SOCOM, will be deploying to Iraq to serve as NCR Baghdad and is expected to be on station on 18 July. [REDACTED], formerly Chief Customer Gateway (S11), replaced [REDACTED] as the new NCR on 27 June 2005.

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